



AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF UNETHICAL ADVERTISING ON ADOLESCENTS

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ABSTRACT

Since India is a country that does not have regulations against commercials to children, it felt necessary to study this area further. The purpose of conducting this study is to provide a better understanding on how advertising to adolescents have negative effects on them and also how it can be very influential in a way as to alter their decisions and even personalities. According to Dotson and Hyatt (2005) in the past years, the level of media exposure in households has changed drastically and as the media usage is increasing it consequently becomes a dominant influence on children's consumer socialization. Yes, we can say that there are a few positive influences of advertising on adolescents, but they fail to outweigh the negative effects brought about by unethical advertising. It is necessary to study on the topic as it is important to understand and know better about consumer socialization and the media exposure to unethical advertising to understand the gravity of the harm being done to adolescents.

KEY WORDS: Adolescents, unethical advertising, advertising influence, consumer socialization, media exposure.

INTRODUCTION:

Advertising is one of the socializing agents that influence children and adolescent throughout the development (Moschis & Churchill, 1978; Friestad & Wright, 2005). Advertising is a form of paid communication which is used to promote different products, services or ideas to the consumers or audience and to persuade them to purchase it. The word advertising comes from the Latin word "Advertere" which means "to turn towards". According to William J. Stanton, "Advertising consists of all the activities involved in presenting to an audience a non-personal, sponsor-identified, paid-for message about a product or organization." The advertisers focus on how the consumers interpret advertisements with keeping in mind how it can reflect their culturally derived values and their culturally learned aspirations and fantasies, therefore the advertisements show the consumers the things they lack and want thus persuading them to buy their service.

A number of questions comes to mind when thinking about the topic, should advertising be permitted to use imagery and words that may insult or offend particular groups? Should advertising be allowed to intrude and consume such a large number of social spaces? And the most important and the topic in focus, is it ethical to advertise to children by using the same advertising techniques that are used when advertising to adults?

Adolescents are vulnerable to advertising as they lack the ability, knowledge and experience to evaluate and understand the purpose of the influential and persuasive advertising. And also, since youngsters of this age cannot differentiate between what is just a persuasive advertisement and what is reality, this misleads them, most of time and they end up believing that advertisements are real.

Problem Statement:

To analyze the impact of unethical advertisements on adolescents and also to understand the influences that unethical advertising/advertisements have on adolescents.

OBJECTIVES:

- To understand the exposure and perception of advertisements among adolescents.
- To examine the influence of advertisements on adolescents.
- To analyze the effects of unethical advertisements on adolescents.
- To evaluate the change in adolescents' behavior owing to unethical advertisements.

METHODOLOGY:

In this study, Survey has been selected as the research method. A survey is tool for collecting data to carry out the research. Surveys is being used in this study as it helps to answer questions that have been put up.

Sampling: Snowball sampling or convenience sampling will be used for the study. Snowballing can be used to approximate a random sample. (Venette, 2013)

Research tool: The tool for data collection will be a mixture of structured and unstructured questionnaire.

Sampling Procedure: A survey will be conducted for this research among adolescents of age group 10-19. The survey will be done in Palakkad Town.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Katke (2019) According to the research, constant exposure to advertisements can create a materialistic idea in the child's mind in which the child is accustomed to believe that having the best things is necessary for a comfortable life. Every manufacturer aims at obtaining a recurring business, which leads them to create flashy advertisements to attract maximum attention.

Abideen and Salaria (2009), children are considered are to be the most awful victims of advertisements' influences. According to the critics most children from around the globe almost spend about three to four hours watching television daily. The negative effects that advertising have on adolescents are that that excessive or prolonged exposure to advertisements can bring laziness and idleness in them and can result childhood obesity, and also materialism.

Hota, McGuigan (2005) the studies show that adolescents have developed some cognitive skills and, a slightly critical and skeptical attitude towards these commercials with age. The increasing cognitive capabilities and knowledge of adolescents have made them doubt the content of the commercials. Due to their changing beliefs and the development of knowledge of what is real and what is fiction, adolescents grow increasingly cynical.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

Objective 1:

Do you watch advertisements daily?

53.3% of the respondents chose 'Yes' and 46.7% chose 'No'. Hypothesis test was done by Chi-square test method in order to find the relationship between the two variables which are exposure to advertisements and age, and exposure to advertisements and gender. The p-value is .126 > .05 and .335 > .05 respectively, therefore there is no significant difference in between the variables.

Do you trust the advertisements that you watch?

26.7% of the respondents chose 'Yes' and 73.3% chose 'No'. Hypothesis test was done by Chi-square test method in order to find the relationship between the two variables which are perception of advertisements and age, and perception of advertisements and gender. The p-value which is .002 < .05 and .502 > .05 respectively, therefore there is a significant difference between the perception of advertisements and age, and there is no significant difference in the case of gender.

Objective 2:

Does advertisements influence your shopping?

84% of the respondents chose 'Yes' and 16% chose 'No'. Hypothesis test was done by Chi-square test method in order to find the relationship between the two variables which are influence of advertisements and age, and influence of advertisements and gender. The p-value which is .420 > .05 and .506 > .05, respectively, therefore there is no significant difference in between the variables.

Objective 3:**Are you aware of the phenomenon of Unethical Advertising?**

53.3% of the respondents chose 'Yes' and 46.7% chose 'No'. Hypothesis test was done by Chi-square test method in order to find the relationship between the two variables which are comprehension of unethical advertising and age, and comprehension of unethical advertising and gender. The p-value which is .449 > .05 and .471 > .05, respectively, therefore there is no significant difference in between the variables.

Objective 4:**Do you go for branded things when shopping?**

77.3% of the respondents chose 'Yes' and 22.7% chose 'No'. Hypothesis test was done by Chi-square test method in order to find the relationship between the two variables which are preference of branded products and age, and preference of branded products and gender. The p-value which is .237 > .05 and .269 > .05, respectively, therefore there is no significant difference in between the variables.

SUMMARY & CONCLUSION:

The aim of the research was to find the effects of unethical advertising on adolescents. Advertising ethics is a complex topic for consideration since it will depend on subjective views of every individual, therefore a lot more should be understood with respect to this. Advertising has immensely grown throughout the years and even though it is considered as a great source of information it has equally lead to the creation of a lot of misconceptions and false ideas and expectations.

In countries like India where there are no specific rules on advertisements to children, children grow up watching inappropriate and unethical advertisements that may affect their physical health or mental health or the combination of both and therefore there was a need to conduct a research on this field to understand the crisis better. As per various other studies conducted on the same topic, it is said that there is a significant amount of change and issues that adolescents go through due to being exposed to unethical advertising.

From the research conducted to identify the effects of unethical advertising it was found that there is a significant difference between the perception of advertisements and age of adolescents. There was no significant difference in any other aspect than this. It can be understood that as adolescents grow older they lose trust in advertisements and understand that advertisements are mostly misleading and are not fact based. Out of the 49 respondents from the age group of 16-19, 42 respondents chose the option 'NO' which means that they do not trust the advertisements that they are exposed to. Whereas the younger age group believe that the advertisements that they watch are trust worthy. Out of the 11 respondents from the age group of 10-12, 7 respondents chose the option 'YES' which means that they trust the advertisements that they are exposed to.

During the survey an open ended question was put up to understand as to why adolescents trust or do not trust the advertisements that they are exposed to better. Some of their answers are given below:

Yes	No
Some companies provide true information about their product.	Advertisements are always overhyped. They usually make their product too good and criticize other products.
Advertisements gives us an exact idea about the product.	Because it's advertising is done for sales and its done to showcase the product positives not the negatives.
The products that I watch through advertisements are worth buying.	The advertisements shown on TV just show the good side of the product and for marketing purpose every company sugarcoat their product to be the best in the market.
I would trust the advertisement of the brand if I have ever used the product.	There is a dark side to advertisements, which particularly children are targeted. Fake scenarios are created to lure people.

From this it is clear that most adolescents end up losing trust in advertisements through their bitter experiences that they have had with the product that they had purchased. With age they realize that most of the things said about the product is fake.

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